

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open



### Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

**Victoria Albina, NP, MPH**

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

This is *Feminist Wellness*, and I'm your host, Nurse Practitioner, Functional Medicine expert, and life coach, Victoria Albina. I'll show you how to get unstuck, drop the anxiety, perfectionism, and codependency so you can live from your beautiful heart. Welcome, my love; let's get started.

Hello, hello, my love. I hope this finds you doing so well. I, for one, am delighted that the days are getting just a wee bit longer. We are already plotting our spring and summer gardens and where we're going to put the new raised beds. I'm just thrilled, because I'm a summer-sun baby and I'm excited to feel warm once again.

By the time you hear this, I will be halfway to a much-needed, warm vacation, in Mexico. Or, we will have gone to, by the time you're hearing this. Isla Holbox, which is near where I used to work in my 20s. I worked on the Yucatan Peninsula in Quintana Roo with Indigenous communities doing public health work. We built composting toilets, greywater recycling systems, and organic gardens. It was absolutely beautiful work.

I spent a good chunk of my 20s, my early 20s, working in Mexico, Nicaragua, Cuba. Traveling for this work, to China and Vietnam. It was just amazing. I'm so glad and grateful that I got to see the world in that way, and to be part of making really important change towards the greater good. And so, anytime I get to go back to Mexico is just such a gift. So, that's me.

How are you? I really do want to hear from you. Drop me a little DM; VictoriaAlbinaWellness. Tell me how you're doing, how your spring is going. It's nice to connect.

Onward to this week's episode. You know what I love, in addition to springtime and warmth and the sun and the beach? I love metáfora. I just love a good metáfora; that's metaphor in Spanish. I think metaphor is such a useful tool for teaching, learning, integrating new information.

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

The other day in Anchored, I was saying something about crossing a bridge in your mind, but then also having your heart be where your feet are. And then also, it was something about 27 little kittens; it was a bajillion metaphors piled on top of each other, because I love metaphors, and I love to mix metaphors.

I am Argentine, and if you know and hopefully love any other Argentines, you will know we are a metaphor-rich gente. I promise I'm going somewhere. So, from the woman who brought you "Be the Cake," Episode 166, which is such a good metaphor, today, I want to talk all about meditating with your eyes open.

Okay, I'm being silly. Because I'm me and I love being silly. And, I love being me. Which, by the way, it's amazing to be able to actually say that; it wasn't always the case. Right? That I loved being me. But now I do, and I'm grateful.

So, let's talk about both, the literalness of meditating with your eyes open and the metáfora. Because actually meditating with your actual, literal, eyes open actually, is a whole literal thing. In Buddhism and other lineages where meditation is a central practice, having your eyes open is the jam. It's what you're taught to do for many very smart reasons.

A-1, is safety, so you'd spy a cobra or a lion or some kind of enemy, should they come up upon you. It's pretty smart to have your eyes open, so you can literally see what's literally in front of you. Just in case, what's literally in front of you is literally dangerous, right?

And then, there are the more spiritual and energetic reasons to meditate with your eyes open. This is where this metaphor applies to the work that we do to overcome our codependent, perfectionist, and people-pleasing thought habits. The work we do in Anchored, my six-month program for people who want to heal and grow, but who also live in the real world.

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

That reason is this; it's super cool to go off to the mountainside to do your inner work. It's wicked to go on retreat. To be alone in the monastery or in a cave or out at the ashram.

It's amazingly rad to take time and step out of the life you've been living, to create space. To ask yourself really important questions. To step into deep inquiry about your life. About the meaning of life. About what we are up to and what you, individually, are up to in your partnership or marriage, and your career, your parenting, your not-parenting, your experience of being human.

There is enormous value in holding your experience at arm's length, and asking: How am I living my everyday life? Does it align with my integrity? With my values? With who I am in the world, and who I want to be? What shifts in my own think-feel-act cycle, or in my somatic or bodily experience, would serve me best right now? What would serve 'future me' best?

Retreat is a beautiful time and place to ask those questions. To hear the answers from deep within yourself, and to give yourself the space to hear those truths. And, while I love retreat... While I love letting myself drift off into a trance-like state during meditation... While I love working with plants into the wee hours of the night... While I love being in a world of my own creation, where I can sort it out, figure it out, ask the questions and listen for the answers; I also live in this world.

I live in this timeline, on this planet Earth, in 2023, on occupied Muncie-Lenape territory, in the Hudson Valley of New York State. With my beautiful and amazing and incredible partner, with whom I share a home and our grumpy 13-year-old Chihuahua-Jack Russell-Pug mutt.

I live in this world with the stress, distress, and trauma that I have survived. With the parents I was given, and all of the complexities there. And also, with a beautiful, incredible, and magnificent sister I was given. Her love is

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

the best thing ever. I live here, with my own brightness, my own light, my own amazingness. And, my own shadow, with my own hard edges, my own soft spots, my own tenderoni. And, my own nervous system, with its settings from infancy and childhood that lead me to get dysregulated sometimes, too; to get activated, or shut down.

This very real human body and mind that can get triggered, the whole of me, all of my inner children, all of my inner parts, we live together right here, right now in this one present moment. And to be fully and deeply present in this moment, to be able to truly take it all in, I have to, we have to, make sure that we balance being on retreat with having our eyes open.

Because the thing about life, is that you can't always easily escape to the bathroom to take a breather and regulate your nervous system. And, it's often even way more challenging to leave home and work for the mountaintop, to sit in silent meditation for a few days or weeks or year.

Sometimes you're the only parent home, and towards the goal of no one accidentally dying, it's incumbent upon you to stay at the dinner table with the screaming toddler.

Sometimes you're running a board meeting when your nervous system starts to get activated, and it would be really super darn helpful to be able to reset and to keep on doing what you want to be doing in that moment for your career.

Sometimes you're in a tough convo with someone you love and the thing you truly want most in the world, is to actually stay present with them and yourself. Because, my beauty, learning how to do this deep work *and* how to be present in our lives, matters.

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

Because, yes, we are spiritual beings. And, we are spiritual beings who live in bodies, with nervous systems, in the world. It behooves us not to forget that. That's where both, the literal and metaphorical, meditating with our eyes open comes into play.

As a way to entrain the body and mind to find calm and stillness. To return to ventral vagal, the safe and social part of the nervous system. To ground and center and come home to ourselves, while also being in and receiving the world exactly as it is.

We can go inward, and that's magical and beautiful and helpful; so healing. Learning to go inward was vital for me as a part of overcoming my own emotional outsourcing. To learn how to sit with myself, to be with myself. To learn how to source and create safety within myself.

For me, that started with meditating with my eyes closed so I could go inside and find out who was there under all my socialization, conditioning, and survival skills from codependent living. Having come into a deep and powerful felt peace within and with myself, I now meditate with my eyes open, to remind me that I create my felt safety in the world. And, that I can do that with eyes open or closed.

Hey, you know what just jumped to my mind? I love my ADHD brain. This conversation, and I'm going off-plan here, but I promise I'll come right back. Meditating with your eyes open or closed, it's kind of like one-on-one coaching versus getting coached as part of the group in Anchored. Stay with me.

So, with your eyes closed, that's the one-on-one coaching. You go in, you focus on you. You do your work on yourself within the sort of cocoon of you and your coach, right? And, that work is incredibly helpful and important. It gets at that self-focused healing that I know we all need.

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

When we open our eyes and meditate, especially when we do that with a sangha, or meditation community, like with the Anchored community, it's a whole different ballgame. Meditating with your eyes open in community is a potent practice for remembering and re-embodiment of our interdependent human nature, as we open our hearts to the others we meditate with.

Or, in Anchored, yes, we do meditate together. So, there are two meditation teachers, who come in and teach us different meditation techniques and lead us in practices; minimum, twice a month in the program, often more.

But also, we learn to keep our eyes open while we're talking about ourselves. While we're doing deep-dive work in our own psyches. As we get coached in front of each other. As we discover ourselves with one another. As we do somatic practices in our child work with one another. As we dance, and move with one another. Do breathwork and integrate breathwork together. That's pretty dope.

Anchored is, in fact, the embodiment of meditating with your eyes open because you're doing your healing in community. Which reminds you, reminds all of us, that the world is what it is because of you. And you are what you are, because of every other creature and being in this world. That is, we are deeply interdependent.

And in Anchored, we practice allowing others to co-regulate our nervous systems. And we lean towards them, to support us in co-regulating our nervous systems, as we remember how to open our hearts and our eyes. Oh, my goodness, that's rad. That's super rad. Hey, brain, thanks for that. That was a really cool, little journey my brain just took us on.

So, you may be thinking, "Maria Victoria, this is delightful in theory, but just how does this apply, in a larger sense, to moi?" Well, you. Let's talk about you. You, who perhaps came here to this show all about emotional

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

outsourcing and the nervous system through a super nerdy feminist lens, because your therapist insinuated or flat-out told you that you're wicked codependent.

Or, because you're realizing how your perfectionism is really making things challenging in your life. Or, because people pleasing is leaving you exhausted at the end of the day, and really aching for more love, care, and support for yourself. Instead of just pouring everything you have out into others.

Whatever it is that brings you to the show, I'm guessing that you may have had an experience similar to what I hear so often from the people who want to join Anchored, and do.

They say, "I read all the books. I did all the listening to all the podcasts, including yours. I did the workbooks; I did the worksheets. I went to talk therapy, and talked 'til I was blue in the face. 'I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains, I looked to the children, I drank from the fountains.'"

"I did all the things. And, I feel so confident, so good, so aligned, so embodied, and all that good stuff, when I'm alone writing in my journal. I feel like I know what to think, what to do, what to feel. That is, until my husband comes at me with, 'Babe, we need to talk.' Or, until my boss says, 'Hey, I need you to stay late.' But I have other plans and I want to set a boundary, but I... But... But..."

"Until my kid has another tantrum, and is screaming on the floor of the Target for no discernible reason. And, I just feel so frustrated and exhausted, I just want to scream at the top of my lungs. Until life gets lifey, and relationships get really real. Until the Universe gives you the opportunity to make a potentially unpopular decision, that will make you so darn happy."



## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

My clients say, “That’s when I feel like everything I’ve read and heard and learned goes right out the window. I don’t know how to apply it. I don’t know how to use it to actually change my life, and I’m desperate to actually make change that actually leads to my life changing.”

I get it, I was there. I chewed it, all the things, all of them, all of them. And, none of it really worked. I mean, it worked, but like not for longer than 10 minutes, or not until challenged, right? Until I learned how to work with my mind, body, and spirit all together, at the same time. Until I learned how to stop siloing my healing into just thought work for my thinking, just yoga for my body, just spiritual stuff for my energy body.

Because siloed healing is meditating with your eyes closed. Listen, it gets you part of the way there, but not fully into the world. It’s not fully integrated healing, right? It took me over 20 years of doing all of the things, to really craft and create the combined thought work-somatic, which means body-based work, that was so key for my own healing.

That’s the work I do with my clients in Anchored. It is work that is integratable. It is work that we bring back with us, from the proverbial monastery, back out into the world. And in so doing, in finally crafting that way of combining these modalities, I was able to start living not just from the neck up, but in the wholeness of my form.

To live a truly embodied life, with more dignity and compassion for myself and others. And the more I am present in my body, the more I am aware of my emotions as whispers in my tummy, in my head, in my hands. When before, my body used to scream and scream, in digestive symptoms, chronic headaches, body aches, depression and anxiety.

The more I integrate my healing across mind, body, and spirit, the more I am metaphorically and literally meditating with my eyes open. The more I am able to use my tools and skills when life gets lifey in the presence of

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

others, when things don't go the way I want them to. When the plan shifts, and something within my body says, "Oh no, we're doomed. Go and hide at the back of the cave."

These days? Eyes open. Instead of believing my brain and going down the rabbit hole, I'm invited down by my limbic, or reptile brain, instead? I show up for myself in a powerful new way. I really know now, that I have my own back and I will no longer self-abandon, like we talked about in Episodes 163 and 164.

Because I'm present in my body now, and self-abandonment is no longer a tenable or attractive offer. Back in the day, it was really easy for me to leave myself and to abandon me, because I wasn't present in my body. And now, from deep and embodied presence, oof, self-abandonment? It feels terrible. I mean, like it's painful, it's yucky, it's oof. And, it's untenable because I honor myself in such powerful new ways now. Because I'm at home in my body, and my body is truly my home.

And here too, we can apply the eyes open metaphor quite literally as well. In emotional outsourcing, living with codependent, perfectionists, and people-pleasing habits, we have our eyes closed to the truths that are often right in front of us.

To the ways that people are treating us. How much we're putting ourselves out for others, and not getting that care back. How much we're attempting to fix, save, change others. How much of our own pain and history we're projecting onto others. How much we believe that *their* thoughts and feelings are ours to manage. Because we make them mean something about us.

We often have our eyes closed to our own unhappiness. I know I did, for so many years. I looked away from it because it was too big and too overwhelming to consider getting myself out of. So, we stay in the

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

comfortable discomfort of the suffering and tolerating and b.s. we know, because of the biological human imperative to not change something that hasn't killed us, yet. Right? Right.

This is the work, my loves. The work is learning not is how to say all the things you want to say when you're alone with your journal, or on the cushion or the mat or the hike. It's about practicing having your own back, and creating embodied safety within yourself, from the nervous system up.

So, that when life comes at you, because life is lifey, your eyes are open to the world. You know how to have your own back. You know and trust yourself to take care of you. You are able to meditate while also meeting the challenges before you. You're able to lean into your skills regardless of what life throws at you. You're able to connect with your breath, with your presence.

You are able to regulate your nervous system, which means to be flexible, and to flow with life as you find your way back to ventral vagal. Or, you're able to stay with sympathetic or dorsal as a choice, and are able to honor those states and give your body what it needs in each. You're able to remember that being regulated in your nervous system, does not mean ever getting upset.

Part of meditating with your eyes open, is that the real world happens. And, it happens just as much while you're meditating as when you're not. With your open eyes and open heart, you can see life happening and can quiet your mind. So, you can answer from your dignity and not from an old nervous system reaction response.

Nervous system regulation is not about being calm and zen all the time. And, neither is meditation. It's about coming home to yourself. It's about Anchoring yourself in you. The more you can practice meditating with your eyes open, the more easily you can come back to your grounded center to

[Feminist Wellness](#) with Victoria Albina, NP, MPH

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

hear that inner voice of wisdom and intuition, regardless of what life throws at you.

The more able you are to regulate your nervous system, the more able you are to flow with life. The more you decide, because it's a decision, to flow with life, the more you show your nervous system that it's safer and safer each day to come back to ventral vagal. To self-regulate back to the safe and social part of your nervous system.

Meditating with our eyes open means not just making change on a coaching call, in therapy yoga, meditation during a somatic practice. It means realizing that catharsis is cute; who doesn't love catharsis? Come on now. Who doesn't love a huge peak experience? But integrated mind-body shifts are the things that change our lives sustainably for the long haul.

Meditating with your eyes open is the shift from practicing new skills and tools to living by them; the move from practice to praxis. And this is what we do in Anchored, each and every day. This is the work I've done and continue doing, that has not just changed my life, but truly and deeply has saved it.

If you, my beauty, are looking for real support, for guidance, for coaching, for ways to actually take this information from something you're listening to, to something real and actionable that changes your life... If you are ready to not just know what to do in your own mind when you're alone, but actually be able to be responsive to the world in a new way, to live with your eyes and heart open, it's time for you to check out my six-month program, Anchored.

Head on over to [VictoriaAlbina.com/Anchored](https://VictoriaAlbina.com/Anchored) to learn more and to apply now. You've got nothing to lose. Why not take a chance on you?

## Ep #212: Meditating with Your Eyes Open

All right, my beauties, let's do what we do. Gentle hand on your heart, should you feel so moved. And remember, you are safe. You are held. You are loved. And when one of us heal, we help heal the world.

Be well, my darling. I'll talk to you soon.

If you've been enjoying the show and learning a ton, it's time to apply it with my expert guidance, so you can live life with intention. Without the anxiety, overwhelm, and resentment, so you can get unstuck. You're not going to want to miss the opportunity to join my exclusive, intimate, group-coaching program. So, head on over to [VictoriaAlbina.com/Masterclass](https://VictoriaAlbina.com/Masterclass) to grab your seat now. See you there; it's gonna be a good one!